



Committee on Student Fees and Budget Review

UNIT REPORT: STUDENT MUSICAL ACTIVITIES

Raj Thanabal, Budget Analyst

Unit Contacts

Brad Brennan

Director, Student Musical Activities

Introduction to the Unit

Student Musical Activities (SMA) is a department within Cal Performances for co-curricular musical ensembles. SMA is a unique unit, in that it is actually composed of several different units: UC Choral Ensembles (UCCE), UC Jazz, and the University of California Marching Band (Cal Band).

Roughly 600 students belong to one of these three groups, with a very significant majority majoring in a field other than music. These groups, consisting of 9 choral groups, 12 different jazz ensembles and the marching band combine to perform in over 500 events annually, for both public and private audiences. Many of these performances are for University spirit events from Big Game Week performances to volleyball and basketball games. The Cal Band is currently in the process of recording a CD of Cal fight songs and is planning a tour to Asia in the late Spring of 2016.

SMA Directors and groups also participate in outreach programs by hosting clinics and workshops for both visiting and nearby high schools and colleges. Many SMA students are also active participants in the Music Connection, an initiative furthering music education for K-12 students in the Berkeley Unified School District.

Unit Director Meeting Findings

One of the primary concerns from the Directors is the lack of and condition of space. Despite serving roughly 600 students, the facilities have under 10 practice rooms, often with shoddy equipment. The pianos in these rooms, described as “terrible” are in the process of being replaced. Additionally, the Cal Band’s rehearsal hall is not large enough for the organization, with the full band unable to all be in the room at the same time and with even a majority creating a fire hazard. UCCE has cited concerns over a single rehearsal having to take place in multiple different rooms throughout a period to accommodate other practicing groups. These facilities are also infested with pests, from cockroaches to mice and until recently, also had asbestos.

The UC Jazz program just completed a \$60,000 renovation of their long antiquated studio, finally making into an acceptable performance space. They are now able to use it for their weekly noon concerts and for their monthly sessions where they invite any music group to perform. The Cal

Band is in the midst of finalizing a proposal to vendors for an \$80,000 renovation of their locker rooms.

The general theme for all three groups is a gross underfunding, yet all three have found ways to not only survive, but to thrive. All three groups offer paid performance gigs, with the Cal Band pulling in \$15,000 from last year's performances, UC Jazz collecting \$6,000, and \$3,500 from UCCE. All three also do extensive fundraising efforts. The Cal Band hosts an annual NorCal Benefit, as well as running fundraisers at BUILD Pizzeria this year. The Band is in year 3 of a \$50,000 New Donor Matching Challenge from former Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost of Berkeley George Breslauer. UCCE receives a significant amount of support from their alumni, though this is not sustainable as there are limited people that they can ask for more funds.

Unfortunately, the groups have had been charging students in order to make up for a lack of funds. The Cal Band charges a onetime \$45 fee to members, while UCCE and UC Jazz charge \$60 and \$75 a semester, respectively. This works out to a four year member paying between \$480 and \$600 just to participate in a musical group. All three Directors also contend that there are many other costs associated with being a member that aren't formalized.

SMA received \$47,600 in CACSSF funding this past year to create an Assistant Director for the Band and bring back part time instructors for UC Jazz. The Jazz proposal is finished while the Band's Assistant Director is still in progress.

Compliance with Guidelines

SMA appears to comply with all SSF guidelines. Very few of the participating students in SMA are actually music majors, and the activities undertaken in SMA are not part of the core curriculum. Likewise, SMA administration is operating in a transparent manner and has been extremely responsive to CSF inquiries.

Preliminary Recommendations

SMA is a constantly underfunded unit especially when considering the worth of the unit. These student musicians sacrifice enormous amounts of time and energy for activities that entertain the students and lend prestige to the university image, very similarly to what student athletes do. Additionally, these organizations have heavy student involvement in functionality practices; what would be a paid employee or a work-study position in other units is a student volunteer for SMA. Each group only has one full time employee (the Directors), though the administration of SMA has more.

Their current financial situation is putting a major strain on the Directors' ability to run the unit as it should. Instead of focusing on their mission statements, much time is spent on fundraising efforts. Additionally, students should not have to be paying for these activities, especially when considering the amount of time and effort that is required, often for the benefit of the University.

SMA has undergone many cuts, from being able to send even a portion of the Cal Band to all away football games to getting rid of master classes by jazz instructors. Despite this, they have found ways to scrap together funding, although almost none of it being from beyond one time sources.

Many of the units SSF supports employ large administrative staffs and possess inefficient infrastructural frameworks. SMA appears to be operating on a very small and efficient framework, and thus SSF funds directed to SMA have the opportunity to make a great deal of difference. As such, my preliminary recommendation would be to increase funding significantly.